

OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO
AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON AIRCRAFT ICING
February 24, 2010

- I welcome everyone to this Subcommittee hearing on aircraft icing.

- In winter weather and at higher altitudes, ice can accumulate on an aircraft's wing, tail, and other areas and can threaten a pilot's ability to control the aircraft. Current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations require that an aircraft has no visible ice present on its wing to takeoff and be certified to fly in icing conditions, if icing is present at the time of takeoff.

- After the 1994 crash of a regional airliner in Roselawn, Indiana, which took 68 lives, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) added icing to its safety "Most Wanted" List in 1997. Since that time, the Board has issued 82 recommendations to

the FAA aimed at reducing risks from icing. Thirty-nine were implemented by the FAA and acceptable progress was made on 25 of them.

➤ Last October, Ranking Member Petri and I held a roundtable on icing issues. During the roundtable, we discussed ice protection systems to prevent ice from forming on an aircraft in-flight.

These systems may not protect in all icing conditions, such as supercooled large droplets (SLDs). In addition, we discussed the current status of aircraft icing standards and procedures.

Because aviation safety is the number one priority of this Subcommittee, we decided to hold a follow-up hearing to fully explore these important issues.

➤ Many challenges exist regarding aircraft icing, such as access to accurate weather information and the need for additional icing-

related research. I would like to focus on the issues of pilot training to operate in icing conditions and the FAA's rulemaking efforts.

- First, while the aircraft operator must maintain an FAA-approved deicing plan, the pilot is ultimately responsible for determining whether the aircraft needs to be deiced. In flight, it is also the pilot's responsibility to deploy the aircraft's ice protection system. Currently, icing must be covered in a commercial pilot's initial and recurrent training. It is critical that this training be specific to the airplane the pilot is flying and the conditions the pilot is likely to encounter.

- To address this concern and raise the bar on safety, we included important icing-related requirements in H.R. 3371, the "Airline Safety and Improvement Act of 2009", to ensure every

commercial pilot has the experience and knowledge to fly safely in icing conditions.

- I look forward to hearing from the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) and the FAA on what needs to be done to provide pilots with better-defined operating procedures for operations in icing and winter weather conditions.

- Second, it has been 13 years since a commercial air carrier was involved in a fatal icing-related accident. However, between 1998 and 2007 there were 523 icing-related aviation accidents involving small commerce operators and general aviation aircraft resulting in 221 fatalities.

- Since the Roselawn accident in 1994, the FAA has issued over 100 icing-related airworthiness directives on 50 different aircraft

models, adopted three final rules, and is conducting additional research on icing in partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

- Despite the FAA's work to date, two critical NTSB recommendations from the 1997 Most Wanted List have not been addressed. Last week, the NTSB adopted its Most Wanted list for 2010, which includes four recommendations to reduce the hazards to aircraft flying in icing conditions. The NTSB said the FAA's efforts in this area have been "unacceptably slow"; I agree.

- The length of time it has taken to complete these icing rules is unacceptable. I understand the deliberative nature of FAA rulemakings, and that even more research may be needed in this area. However, 13 years have passed since the NTSB made

recommendations to change the way aircraft are designed and approved for flight in icing conditions and these recommendations are still open with unacceptable responses. The FAA must adopt a systematic and proactive approach to address the icing criteria for aircraft certification and testing. I look forward to hearing from Mr. Hickey on the steps the agency is taking to finish the icing-related rules as soon as possible.

- I am also interested to hear from the GAO on research I requested regarding icing and any recommendations it might have on this topic.

- Before I recognize Mr. Petri for his opening statement, I ask unanimous consent to allow 2 weeks for all Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of

additional statements and materials by Members and witnesses.

Without objection, so ordered.